

RESOLUTION 12-A-05

A RESOLUTION SETTING FORTH THE TOWN OF BLACKSBURG'S 2006 LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

WHEREAS, the Town of Blacksburg intends to adopt legislative proposals for the 2006 General Assembly, so that more effective tools will be available to local governing bodies to serve their citizens better;

WHEREAS, in these proposals, the Town requests the General Assembly to protect local revenue sources, to maintain local government's land use decision making powers, and provide greater authority for creative solutions to local issues.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Blacksburg that the following constitutes the Town of Blacksburg's proposals for legislative action to the 2006 General Assembly:

1. The general legislative policy of the Town of Blacksburg is that the General Assembly must permit Virginia local governments to govern. The state is an entity and, as such, has a job description that includes those things that cannot be done well, if at all, by local government. Conversely, the state should not usurp the taxing authority and service delivery that are clearly within the purview of local government. Local governments need broad authority from the General Assembly to address local problems and issues. While counties, cities, and towns across the Commonwealth experience similar challenges, the appropriate response may vary from locality to locality. Thus, authorizing legislation should empower local governments, without dictating a single, statewide, solution. Finally, governing requires financial resources. Blacksburg currently enjoys a diverse revenue stream, but the financial health of the town would be adversely affected by the legislative impairment of any financial sources.

2. Specific proposals:

(a) **Land Use**

Local Decision Making

Planning and land use policy are essential functions of local government. Localities should maintain control of local land use decisions. Land use and zoning decisions in the Town of Blacksburg are guided by the Town's Comprehensive Plan which is developed with significant local citizen input. By closely adhering to the Town's Comprehensive Plan, local land use decisions are directed by the vision of the local community. The Town of Blacksburg opposes any efforts by State and Federal government to direct or restrict land use planning and decision making by local governments. The General Assembly should enhance local government's ability to implement their comprehensive plans by allowing for local decision making and authorizing a full spectrum of land use and planning tools for local elected bodies to use.

(b) Transportation

Funding

The Town of Blacksburg urges the state's leaders to address the documented transportation funding shortfalls for both maintenance and construction. The current formula to determine the amount of reimbursement for maintenance is not keeping pace with the increasing costs.

Local Option Construction Administration

The Town of Blacksburg supports the option of localities to manage their own urban highway construction programs without unnecessary oversight or financial burdens from the state government.

Local Option Roadside Management

The Town of Blacksburg supports the local option for roadside management which would allow local governments and civic groups to provide additional maintenance and beautification to state maintained highways above what is currently provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation. Funding should be appropriated to maintain current roadsides.

Public Transportation

Blacksburg is home to a very successful public transportation system, Blacksburg Transit. The Town of Blacksburg encourages increased state and federal funding for local transit agencies and policies that allow for the maximum use of that funding. The Town also requests that the state government ensure that new services provided by adjacent local transit systems provide services that compliment both systems and not create competing local transit services. Blacksburg has worked closely with the local Metropolitan Planning Organization to plan service expansions that directly serve the needs of the New River Valley and compliment other regional transit services between the Roanoke and New River Valleys.

TransDominion Express

The Town of Blacksburg strongly supports passenger rail service to southwest Virginia. The TransDominion express will help to stimulate economic development and tourism as well as helping to alleviate the demands on Interstate 81.

(c) Finance - Local Control

Local governments must retain control of their existing revenue sources so that they have a reliable revenue base to meet the needs of their citizens. To ensure the stability and long-term viability of Virginia local governments, the state must broaden, not restrict, the revenue sources available to local governments. Local control of revenue sources is essential in light of local governments' historical experience with state funding commitments. Any changes to Virginia's system of local real estate taxation should provide flexibility for local governments, not arbitrary caps on rates or assessment increases.

(d) Relationship of Towns to Counties

Towns are essential units of local government, providing enhanced services to incorporated, urbanized areas of counties. The General Assembly must carefully review

all legislation dealing with local governments to avoid enacting laws that would create conflicts between towns and their surrounding county.

(e) Fully Fund State Services and Restore 4-For-Life Funding

The State should fully fund existing services that it requires local governments to provide and avoid shifting the costs of these services to local governments. Furthermore, the State should provide localities with the 4-For-Life revenue (an increase in vehicle registration fees from \$2 to \$4) originally intended for increased local emergency medical services funding, but which has been transferred to the State's general fund and appropriated for other purposes. Since 2002, localities have lost an estimated \$2.8 million in 4-For-Life funding, and the Town of Blacksburg requests that the General Assembly restore this funding.

(f) Transportation of Psychiatric Patients

Local law enforcement agencies are required by the State to transport Virginia residents in need of involuntary psychiatric evaluation to mental health facilities. Many of these patients are required to be transported long distances to an acceptable institution. This requires local law enforcement officers to leave their jurisdictions while transporting these patients over significant distances, many times impacting the available police strength in their own communities. Local police officers are not trained to properly respond to any medical or psychiatric incident or emergency which might develop during these transports. These transports place a burden on local law enforcement agencies through unbudgeted overtime, loss of police patrols, and the stress associated with such transports. The Town of Blacksburg requests that the General Assembly take progressive and appropriate steps to remove local law enforcement agencies from this inappropriate and improperly imposed responsibility.

(g) Telecommunications - Taxes and Franchise Fees

It is likely that legislation will be introduced that would eliminate local government taxes on telecommunications services and introduce a statewide tax that would return a portion to localities. While such legislation may be more efficient, localities have reason to be concerned that it may not be revenue neutral for local governments or that the revenues will be diverted.

In the name of greater competition, significant pressures are also being placed on the ability of localities to control the use of their rights-of-way. While regulations must reflect changing technology, the General Assembly must preserve local government's ability to regulate the use of rights-of-way.

Mayor

ATTEST:

Clerk

Date of Adoption: _____